**Structured Small Group Program**

**Conflict Resolution**

**Let’s make a change**

**Population:** This group will be comprised of 10-12 eighth grade boys at Sandusky Middle School. This group will focus on resolving conflicts in a positive and healthy manner. The participants in this group have been pre-screened and chosen by the school’s principals, teachers, and guidance counselors.

**Goals/Purpose**: All of the students scored low on the school’s potential at risk survey and had difficulties in the subsequent areas: Each student had at least three detentions, two suspensions, or numerous in-school suspensions for disruptive behaviors in the classroom, hallway, or after-school program in the first three grading periods. This group will allow its members to peacefully work together, have respect for one another, and improve their peer interaction skills. The increase in the student’s conflict resolution skills will also make for a calmer school environment, and is united with the school’s mission statement to improve the academic achievement of all students.

Sandusky Middle School Mission Statement: Mission Statement: To advance the social, career, and academic development of all students. Our school promotes a safe, orderly, caring, and supportive environment. Each student's self-esteem is fostered by positive relationships with students and staff. We strive to have our parents, teachers, and community members actively involved on our students' learning.

**Rational/Need:** 1. Disciplinary Records 2.In-School Suspension logbook 3. Referrals

Data will be collected on the reasons for the referrals which will indicate how these disruptive behaviors are hindering each student’s potential relationships and negatively impacted each student’s academic performance. Each of the student’s classroom teachers has been interviewed and reported that the student’s academic performance is poor due to oppositional behaviors, poor peer interactions, off-task behaviors and being out of the year school’s potential at- risk survey. There has been collateral contacts made to each one of the students’ parents discussing the goals of the group and every parent has signed a consent form allowing their child to participate in the intervention. This group will focus on conflict resolution and come up with strategies on how to resolve conflicts in a positive and healthy manner. Corey states,” Solution focused brief therapy, or solution-focused counseling as it is sometimes called, is grounded on the optimistic assumption that people are resourceful and competent and have the ability to construct solutions that can change the direction of their lives (Corey, 2012). The Solution focused brief therapy model will be utilized in this group because it focuses on making positive changes, not worrying about the past, and coming up with the solutions that will assist the student’s in the future. This is essential for this group of boys because they are eighth graders who are transitioning to high school next year.

**Recruitment and Screening:** Each student has been referred or chosen by the principals, teachers, and counselors at the school. These students were chosen due to their disciplinary referrals, low scores on the school’s at-risk survey, and difficulties in their ability to positively resolve conflicts. All of the students along with their parents have been interviewed to discuss the problems they are having with resolving conflicts and the goals of this structured group. All of the parents have also signed consent forms allowing their child to participate in the group. The group will be limited to nine members and the students who do not make the group will be referred to the community service board for a psychiatric evaluation and individual counseling.

**Theoretical Orientation:** The counselor will utilize Solution focused brief therapy in this group to aid the students in increasing their conflict resolution skills. Solution focused brief therapy will be used because it concentrates on coming up with solutions instead of focusing on the problem. Solution focused brief therapy will also be beneficial because it encourages building a strong rapport and therapeutic relationship between counselor and client. The group leader will be a strong source of motivation when using this method. Basher says, “Understandably, school counselors frequently feel inundated by the many non-counseling duties they must perform. As a result they may often feel they have limited time for counseling students. Thus, school counselors need a counseling approach that will work within a few sessions. One such strategy, Solution focused brief therapy has been found to be an effective short term approach to use in school settings” (Basher, 2009). Goals will also be established to measure the effectiveness of the group and Changed-focused questions will be a major part of the group process. These questions will be an essential part of the group process because it will allow students to build off of their own strengths and come up with treatment goals that they feel are important.

**Ethical, Legal, and Multicultural:** The group leader should initially be aware that the students are minors and do not have the legal right to make their own decisions. It would also be absolutely necessary to keep in mind the counselors “duty to warn”. Erford says, “When a counselor becomes aware that clients are in danger of being harmed, as in instances of abuse, or that clients are likely to harm themselves or someone else, the counselor can break confidentiality and tell an appropriate person”. This is clearly stated in the ACA Code of Ethics and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors. There must be signed parental consent from each student’s parents in order for them to participate in the group. This group will also be sensitive to multi-cultural issues as well as respect and recognize the cultural diversity in the group. The group will attempt to choose students from different racial, ethnic and SES backgrounds. The group will address and be aware of cultural biases, stereotypes and prejudices.

**Structure:** The Conflict Resolution group will meet for eight thirty minute sessions. The group will meet in the conference room parallel to the principal’s office. The group will meet on consecutive Monday’s during second period. The group will also run twice a year, once each semester.

**Core ASCA standards:** A1.5-Identify attitudes and behaviors that lead to successful learning; A 1.6- Distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors; A1.8- Understand the need for self-control and how to practice it ; A3.2-Demonstrate the ability to work independently, as the ability to work cooperatively with others; A3.3-Develop a broad range of interests and abilities.

**Core Academic State Standards:** English Standard of Learning/ Oral Language-The student will develop and deliver oral presentations in groups and individually (VA English SOL 8.2)

Math Standard of Learning8.13 The student will a)make comparisons, predictions, and inferences, using information displayed in graphs;(VA Math SOL 8.13)

**Objectives:**

1. Group members will improve their overall peer interaction skills, communication skills, and ability to positively resolve conflicts
2. Group members will reduce their amount of disciplinary referrals, detentions, and suspensions by 50% the fourth week of the group
3. Group members will reduce their amount of disciplinary referrals, detentions, and suspensions by 75% by the end of the group.
4. Teachers will record less conflicts during instructional time, and less times that the group member is out of class because of disciplinary reasons.
5. Group members will verbalize at least three ways to resolve conflicts in a positive and healthy way.
6. Group members will communicate with at least two of their teachers to see what they could do to improve their academic performance.
7. Group members academic achievement will increase 25%
8. Group members will practice using conflict resolution skills by role-playing, and participating in group activities throughout the program.

**Program Evaluation:** This group will be evaluated by the pre and post test scores on the at-risk survey given at the initial and termination stage of the group process. The group will be also evaluated by the goal objectives and feedback from the teachers, counselors, and principals at the school. The calculation of the group member’s disciplinary records at the beginning and the end of the group will also be a determination as to how effective the group is.

**Title of Session #2: “Conflict Resolution Debate”**

**Brief Summary of Session:** In the second session the Counselor will conduct the “M&M icebreaker” as a group building exercise. After the icebreaker the Counselor will go over the rules of the group and discuss the rule of “confidentiality”. The Counselor will then briefly discuss last week’s session and review the definition of conflict. The Counselor will then discuss last week’s homework assignment of brainstorming ways to positively resolve conflicts. The counselor will then introduce the activity called the “Conflict Resolution Debate” (hand-out included). The Counselor will also explain how these debate aligns with their eight grade English SOL of developing and delivering oral presentations in groups and individually. After the debate activity the Counselor will ask several questions to the group members on how to peacefully disagree with others, and positive resolve conflicts. After the activity the Counselor will give the group members a homework assignment to bring back to the group next session. The homework assignment is to think of one time in the next week that they positively resolved a conflict at school, at home, or in the community.

**Theoretical Orientation:** The Counselor is using Solution Focused based therapy when conducting this group. Corey says, “The qualities of the therapeutic relationship are at the heart of the effectiveness of SFBT. Client ratings of the therapeutic relationship and alliance are significantly related to the therapeutic outcome” (Corey, 2012). Techniques that will be used are questioning, scaling questions, formula first session task, and motivational interviewing. The Solution focused brief therapy approaches also line up with the ASCA National model.

**Duration:** *30 minutes*

**Materials/ Media:** Poster for group rules, M&M’s in a cup for the icebreaker activity, and “Conflict Resolution Debate Directions”

**Core ASCA Standard(s):***.* A 1.6- Distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors; A1.8- Understand the need for self-control and how to practice it; A3.2-Demonstrate the ability to work independently, and the ability to work cooperatively with others.

**Core State Academic Standard(s):** English Standard of Learning/ Oral Language-The student will develop and deliver oral presentations in groups and individually (VA English SOL 8.2)

**Objectives:** **: 1.Group** members will practice using conflict resolution skills by role-playing, and participating in group activities throughout the program

2. Group members will improve their overall peer interaction skills, communication skills, and ability to positively resolve conflicts

3. Group members will verbalize at least three ways to resolve conflicts in a positive and healthy way.

**Assessments**: The counselor will assess the group by evaluating feedback from group members.

**Procedures/ Instructional Strategy:**  The Counselor will welcome the group members back to the second session of the conflict resolution group. The Counselor will discuss the progress of the group to foster group cohesion. The Counselor will introduce an icebreaker activity called the “M&M” game which is intended to help the client’s get to know each other and assist with building a strong rapport. Following the icebreaker activity the Counselor will go over the group rules and discuss the importance of confidentiality. After the rules are presented the Counselor will review the definition of “conflict” and discuss the homework assignment given to the group members last session. The Counselor will remind the group members that the homework assignment was for the students to think of two ways to positively resolve conflicts. After this the Counselor will facilitate the activity called the “Conflict Resolution debate” activity. Following the debate the Counselor will give the group members the homework assignment to be completed by the next session.

**Homework:** The Counselor will explain to the group members that they will need to think of one way that they were able to positively resolve a conflict in the school, home, or community.

**Group Stage/ Emerging Issues:** This is the second group session so the group will be in the initial and working stage. Erford says,” During the first stage, Hulse-Killacky stressed that members should introduce themselves to one another and identify the task and purpose of the group. The second stage includes working on accomplishing the identified task, while also developing an understanding how members will work together” (Erford, 2010).

**Title of Session #2:”Let’s see if we can resolve these conflicts”**

**Brief Summary of Session:** In the third session the Counselor will conduct the “What’s in a name” icebreaker as a group building exercise. After the icebreaker the Counselor will go over the rules of the group and discuss the rule of “confidentiality”. The Counselor will then briefly discuss last week’s session and discuss ways that I personally have been able to resolve conflicts. The Counselor will then discuss last week’s homework assignment of thinking of one way that they had had to resolve conflicts over the last week and how this made them feel. The counselor will then introduce the Conflict Resolution survey. After the survey is completed the Counselor will discuss the items in the survey to spark a group discussion. After the discussion the Counselor will introduce verbal and non-verbal communication. The Counselor will then give the group members a homework assignment to bring back to the group next session. The homework assignment is for the group members to at least one time walk away or ignore a potential conflict.

**Theoretical Orientation:** The Counselor is using Solution Focused based therapy when conducting this group. Corey says, “The qualities of the therapeutic relationship are at the heart of the effectiveness of SFBT. Client ratings of the therapeutic relationship and alliance are significantly related to the therapeutic outcome” (Corey, 2012). Techniques that will be used are questioning, scaling questions, formula first session task, and motivational interviewing. The Solution focused brief therapy approaches also line up with the ASCA National model.

**Duration:** *30 minutes*

**Materials/ Media:** Poster for group rules, and Conflict Resolution Survey

**Core ASCA Standards:** A1.5-Identify attitudes and behaviors that lead to successful learning; A 1.6- Distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors; A1.8- Understand the need for self-control and how to practice it

**Core State Academic Standard(s):** Math Standard of Learning8.13 The student will a)make comparisons, predictions, and inferences, using information displayed in graphs;(VA Math SOL 8.13)

**Objectives**: 1.Group members will practice using conflict resolution skills by role-playing, and participating in group activities throughout the program

2. Group members will improve their overall peer interaction skills, communication skills, and ability to positively resolve conflicts

3. Group members will verbalize at least three ways to resolve conflicts in a positive and healthy way.

**Assessments**: The counselor will assess the group by evaluating feedback from group members.

**Procedures/ Instructional Strategy:**  The Counselor will welcome the group members back to the third session of the conflict resolution group. The Counselor will discuss the progress of the group to foster group cohesion. The Counselor will introduce an icebreaker activity called the “What’s in a name” game which is intended to help the client’s get to know each other and assist with building a strong rapport. Following the icebreaker activity the Counselor will go over the group rules and discuss the importance of confidentiality. After the rules are presented the Counselor will review verbal and nonverbal communication and discuss the homework assignment given to the group members last session. The Counselor will remind the group members that the homework assignment was for the group members to bring back one way that they were able to positively resolve a conflict in the school, home, or community. After this the Counselor will facilitate the conflict resolution survey and discussion. Following the discussion the Counselor will give the group members the homework assignment to be completed by the next session.

**Homework**: The homework assignment is for the group members to at least one time walk away or ignore a potential conflict.

**Group Stage and Emerging Issues**: This is the third group session so the group is at the end of the initial stage and transitioning to the and working stage. Erford says,” During the first stage, Hulse-Killacky stressed that members should introduce themselves to one another and identify the task and purpose of the group. The second stage includes working on accomplishing the identified task, while also developing an understanding how members will work together” (Erford, 2010).

**References:**

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Erford, B.T. (2010). Group Work in the Schools. Boston, MA: Pearson.

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New Jersey: Pearson Education, INC.

Appendix A

At-Risk Survey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Place a check mark in the box that best fits your answer to the following statements.

Almost Never Sometimes Often Almost Always

When I have a problem with a peer, I am able to resolve the conflict peacefully.

I feel powerful when I make a good choice.

I tell people how I am feeling.

I am treated with respect by my teachers.

I have friends at school.

I am responsible for my actions.

My parents tell me “good job” when I do something well.

I feel loved.

I am able to display my strengths at school.

School is fun.

I resolve conflict by fighting.

My mood affects my ability to resolve conflict in a positive way.

I regret how I react when I disagree with others.

I positively resolve conflicts with others.

I negatively resolve conflicts with others.

I get into trouble when I have conflicts with others.

Appendix B:

Sandusky Middle School

Parent/Guardian Consent for Individual and Group School Counseling Services

This is to inform you that your student, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, has been referred to the school counselor by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for concerns related to:

Academic \_\_\_\_\_ Behavior \_\_\_\_\_\_ Social \_\_\_\_\_\_ Personal \_\_\_\_\_\_

School Counselor will conduct counseling services via:

Individual counseling  Small group counseling sessions

Topics to be covered during the counseling sessions may include one or more of the following:

Emotional Concerns Academic Performance

Behavioral Concerns Interpersonal Relationships

Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Counseling sessions are generally 20 -30 minutes. All counseling sessions will take place in the school building in an atmosphere that supports the confidential nature of the sessions.

Confidentiality:

It is the ethical and legal responsibility of the counselor to safeguard students from unauthorized disclosures of information given in the context of counseling sessions. Therefore, information revealed between the counselor and student during the counseling session is confidential. It is the counselor’s hope that the parent, teacher, and/or administrator be involved in the helping process while maintaining counselor-student confidentiality. The limitations to confidentiality include:

1. When student poses danger to self, others, or the property of others.

2. When counselor suspects abuse or neglect.

3. Upon authorization of parent/student.

4. Under court order.

In some circumstances school counselors may be required to breach confidentiality as a matter of school policy. These limitations will be discussed with students during initial counseling sessions. Also, in group counseling sessions, the importance of confidentiality is stressed but cannot be guaranteed between group members.

Consent:

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, have read and understand the contents of this informed consent.

(please print name)

I give my child permission to participate in the proposed counseling activities.

Parent/Guardian Signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_